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### Cub Tracks, Spring 1944

Students of the Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.)

Harold G. Merriam

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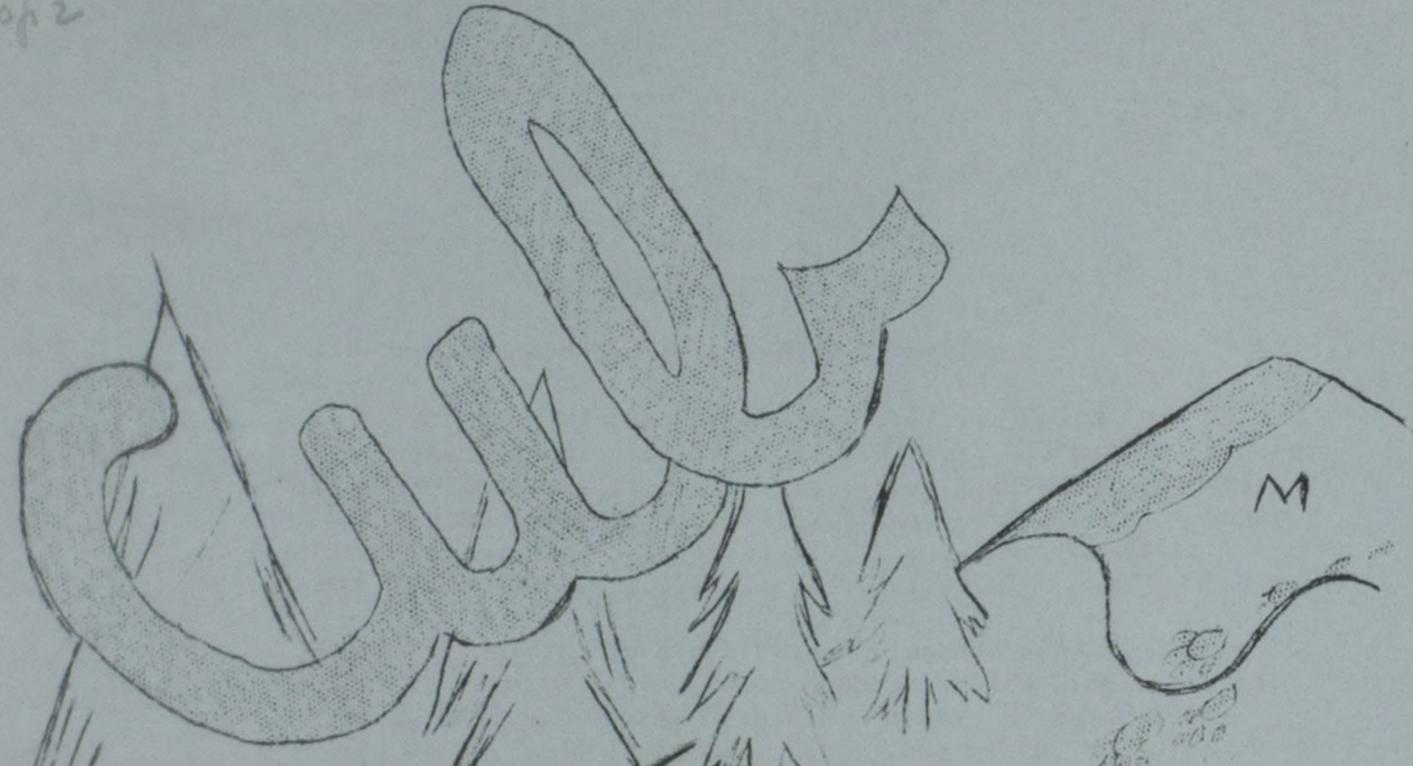
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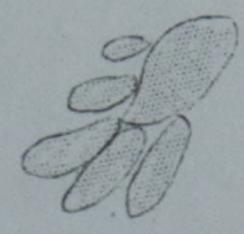
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# TRACKS

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1944



CUB TRACKS

Freshman-Sophomore Literary Magazine

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## GOD IN THE MOUNTAINS

Mrs. Potter's sharp voice cut through the pre-dinner dim. "It said fifty bombers were lost--the greatest bombing raid yet over Berlin--American Air Force.." Then the cook slapped the steaks on the sizzling skillet and the hiss that rose with a cloud of savory smoke drowned out her voice.

The voice, the hissing, the shouts, the tramping of heavy boots and the myriad of other kitchen sounds stopped for a moment while the effect of the careless statement settled upon me. Bombers, Berlin, raid--fifty planes lost--Ray!! And the dread of the thought surged through my heart. I stood in the pantry, the lid of the cream can unnoticed in my hand with tiny rivlets of cream dripping onto the clean floor. The squat green pitchers waited, empty, like baby robins with wide open mouths, only silent as was the whole world in that moment.

Then, slowly I filled the pitchers and went about my other duties. I arranged the silver in its place, knives, spoons and forks like shining ladies and gentlemen in position for a dance, filled the water glasses with a tense forced steadiness, and executed the innumerable other duties which had become sheer habit in three months "hashing" on a dude ranch. In slow, grueling order the events passed, cocktails, main course, elcar and dessert; and with each act the voice in my head--"bombers, Berlin, raid, Ray."

Then the dudes were full and contented with their small world of horses, steak and bridge. The piles of green dishes were arranged in their neat order on the shelves. All I wanted was escape from the indifferent voices, careless laughter and plans for the Saturday night dance at Ovands. Oh, where to be alone? And then I remembered the hills.

It was raining outside and thunder echoed from one hill to another in the little valley. Streaks of lightening turned the grey world about me into momentary glimpses of emerald green, sunless, yet aglow with a white light from an unseen source. The cool rain carressed my face, gently beating away the daze of fear which had fallen upon me. Slowly I began to think, calmly and steadily. The sharp voice died back in the cavern of my thoughts. Then, by sheer habit, I began to pray and words formed on my lips. God, so near in this wet, fresh world, came to me, bringing me peace and courage to face the waiting until I should know if Ray's plane were one of the fifty shot. Then God went back to the mountains and I went back to the ranch.

---English 11 b Anna Jo Kelly

## STRAW STACK

In March, a strawstack is a messy looking thing; it sags at the edges and looks rusty on the sloping sides where the snow has melted. On the ground around it the straw is packed down by tramping cattle, who have bored deep holes into it as protection against the cold. Crawling back into one of the dark corners you can detect the odor of coyotes who have been nesting there recently. After you are halfway into the hole chaff falls inside your collar and the dust you have been stirring up makes you sneeze so you wiggle out again. Then, as you make a dash up the side of the stack, the soggy top layer comes loose and you slide all the way down with an avalanche of moldy straw. Finally, after

(Straw Stack continued)

several attempts, you get to the top and walk around, the straw making you spring up at each step as though you were on a cloud. And indeed, as you kick off the damp top, the dry straw underneath looks as if it were a cloud painted yellow by the sun. You could play God up here looking over all the pasture.

---English 59 Flora Mae Bellefluer

SHADOWS

Early they appear  
with the sunrise  
To shorten as  
the seen in his ride  
approaches mid-day  
And gradually lengthen  
Into night  
Completely lost.

---English 118 Babraba Ward

## FOG

In a fog so dense that I could see only a few feet ahead of me, I started to walk down the mountain trail to the crater lake a mile below. I was alone on the mountain and the fog made me more aware of my aloneness. On other mornings I had been able to watch an ever-changing sunrise as I walked down to the lake; I had been able to see the effects of the early sunlight upon the lake and upon the high, rock-layered cliff rising up from one side of it. This morning the wetness of the fog enveloped me. I hurried down the first half of the trail which was of broken rock, but when I reached the first grove of trees, I stopped in awe. I felt that I had stepped from the barren rock into a tiny wonderland. The grass, washed and fresh with moisture from the fog, seemed to sparkle with bright greenness, even though no sun shone on it. The few trees in my little circle of visibility sheltered and reassured me. Every tree, bush and blade of grass was heavily loaded with moisture and the dazzling greenness sharply impressed itself upon my sight. I listened. The only sound was the soft drip, drip of the dew as it fell from trees and bushes. I could smell the wet pine needles, decayed logs, the sweet odor of blooming bear paws, the tangy odor of huckleberry bushes and most of all, the wet freshness of the earth. The impressions I received in the few minutes I stood in the clump of trees stamped themselves firmly upon my mind and senses, and made me realize that fog is not eerie; instead it brings out the earthiness of the earth and the greenness of living plants.

---English 11a Florence Brackett

## THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Captain Joe had always been my friend. We grew up together; we went to school together, and now we were living together. He was personnel officer in the Air Corps, and I was going to college.

One evening, I came home to find him sitting on his bed, gazing dejectedly at the floor. His head drooped; his face was a picture of sorrow. Usually he was gay and cheerful. I was therefore alarmed and asked, "What's the matter, Joe? I hope nothing drastic has happened."

He was silent for a while, then slowly began to talk-----

"I met a girl about three months ago. She's a blonde. Not too bad, with attractions--a Buick car and lots of money." He lapsed into silence and sighed.

I was relieved to hear that no one had died, but not relieved that he was in love. I'd have to do what I could to help him. So I said, "Can't you get a date with her?"

He answered, "I have one."

"Doesn't she like you?"

(The Voice of Experience Continued)

"Yes, she does," he murmured, then sighed and groaned under his breath.

"Well, if you think that much of her, why don't you ask her to marry you?" I suggested.

Joe looked up with his eyes full of sorrow; in a low voice he said, "I did."

I felt embarrassed having heard so much, but blundered on. "I thought you said she liked you. Don't take it so hard; there are other girls."

He looked up and said, "She didn't say 'No'. Bill, if you don't want 'em, don't ask 'em."

---English 25b Curtis Stadstad

### MY PARADISE LOST

When I was bored with life and its amusements or fretful because of the futility of school work, how often I used to escape to some far flung spot in the South Pacific, or to the jungles of Borneo. Never really thinking of going there, I reveled in the romance of the unknown mysterious lands. With Kipling I traveled to the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking "eastward to the sea", or all the way "from Rangoon to Mandalay". I dreamed of islands where the natives were a foot shorter than we, those islands whose very names conjured up romantic scenes; Landfall, Interview, Labyrinth. And I had heard that the natives seemed to thrive on a diet of their fellow men, blood-curdling thought though it was.

Oriental rugs, old tea chests, lacquer boxes on coffee tables, elaborate fans kept under bell jars all carried from China on Clipper ships sent my mind on exciting journeys to fragrant lands. I felt almost as one with those old sea-faring captains of my great-aunt's day, sailing around the horn to new horizons, Java head, The Celebes, Bombay, Masqat on the Persian Gulf.

Sumatra, Java, Bali,-----as a child I had listened, wide-eyed, to my great-aunt's tale of the old Javanese witch doctor, dressed in cerise monkey jackets and flaring lime skirts, selling a mysterious salve which he extracted from a human skull with the use of a fingernail grown long for just such a purpose. She told me the name of the ugly crocheted article on the chair-back, used to protect it from the oil used by great-uncle John in an effort to preserve his hair--antimacassar, and she said the oil had come from Macassar, somewhere to the Far East. Great-uncle John carried a malacca stick, and Great-aunt Ned had a cabinet inlaid with amboyana wood from the same little-known section of the world. I had gleaned ideas, too, from her collection of lurid lithographs of graceful Bali dancers, in strange unorthodox clothing. How lovely to go to Bali!

This war has completely shattered my illusions. My paradise no longer exists. The most uncivilized activity of civilized man has finally invaded the most remote islands, the tiniest coral barriers of the East. In bold headlines, we read that the Straits of Macassar are filled with death-dealing craft, Java is scorched earth, Siam is under fire, and Burma is a maelstrom of flaming oil.

To what land, now, can even the tired mind turn for romantic escape? To what land now can the pioneer venturer turn? Searchers for unusual commodities, of strange tales and articles to hand down from generation to generation--from what far off place will they come? Before us today lies a future of new inventions, of new ideas in political, economic, and cultural life. But to nowhere can we turn to the old, many centuries old, way of doing things.

But you say, "After the war, you can see and do these things then." But will he be able to? Those romantic names, those exotic tales of my great-aunt's day are dead, Upon the ruins of devastated countries will be built a new culture and way of living, sanitation, scientific agriculture, industry, trade and commerce.

Perhaps ten years from now, my children will listen to the repetition of my great-aunt's tales, but will they listen more raptly to the adventurous story of "Dad's" army travels? No, I'm afraid my paradise is truly lost, destroyed, by the progress of war.

---English 11b Bab Bradner

## ICE OF WINTER

The ice of winter thick does be,  
 The earth is silent, brooding, still.  
 The barren land makes no reply  
 To yearnings of the hidden will--  
 A will to find again the sun,  
 And winter's hold to be undone.

The bitter brunt of harsh wind's play  
 Does wear relentlessly upon  
 This well; and yet the upward way  
 Is still before though light is gone.  
 For though the earth seems cold and dead,  
 The spirit lives to surge ahead.

The heart's despair is like a weight  
 Which drags upon man's struggling well  
 That fights the force of bitter hate,  
 And passionate grief born from the ill  
 of madmen's plans of devastation--  
 The inward bleeding of a nation.

Its progress, slow and cruelly hindered,  
 This never dying urge of man  
 To struggle on is cruelly kindred  
 To waking movements of the land.  
 For ~~through~~ the darkness of the fight  
 The Will shall carry hope and light.

—English 11b Anna Jo Kelly

## HIS FLAG

He was standing among the crowd on the sidewalk by the oval, watching the parade—just a boy of about nineteen. I don't know why I noticed him unless it was the expression on his face as he watched the flag flutter slowly to the ground. His eyes were the only moving part of him, and yet, somehow, I got the feeling that he was holding himself under control, that something within him was straining for release.

His tense attitude held my interest. I felt that I had to find out more about him, why this everyday event of the lowering of the flag should mean so much more to him than to the other people around us. I stood quietly watching him, not wanting him to notice that I was observing him, and yet, there was no cause for worry, because he was absorbed in some world of his own.

I began to build up conjectures about him in my mind. Perhaps he had brothers in the service. Maybe they were missing in action, or even killed. Or, yes..., this must be it. The logical thing was that he was probably to

be inducted into the services soon himself and was thinking of the time when he would be a part of the men fighting for our country.

Just as I arrived at this conclusion, he turned and started to walk away. He gazed past me with unseeing eyes as the breeze lifted the empty sleeve of his coat.

---English 25A Leah Ferris

### SWINGING THE CLASSICS

With popular composers such as Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, and Cab Calloway contributing a vast amount of material for dance orchestras, I see no reason for interfering with the music of the great masters. This continual habit of stealing melodies from the familiar works of Bach, Mozart, Chopin, Grieg, and Tschaikowsky should come to an end. I say this because classical and swing are two different fields in music. Swing differs from classical music in that the orchestra which performs the great classics recreates the composer's musical ideas just as the composer conceived them. The performer is in a secondary role. In swing the performer appears in a more creative role by improvising and transforming the composer's fundamental melodic idea into his own conception of the theme. Therefore, when a theme such as that appearing in the first movement of Tschaikowsky's brilliant concerto in B flat minor for piano and orchestra is simplified, changed in rhythm and tempo, and played by a hot jazz orchestra in which some trumpet player or some other member of the orchestra has the sudden urge of improvising the melody to satisfy his emotional state, it then becomes a mad conglomeration of foot moving notes consisting only of tricky rhythmical patterns. It is not my plan in this article to criticize or condemn good jazz orchestras for as Hugh Qanassie in his book "Hot Jazz" says, "To ignore the talent of the orchestra in jazz, (swing) is like ignoring the talent of the composer in classical music."

When a melody such as the one already mentioned is changed and given the title "Tonight We Love" it becomes merely a wish-washy love song sung to unspeakably bad words. Tschaikowsky's melodies have suffered the most, but there have been others that have been herded through the doors of Tin Pan Alley, politely put through the meat grinder to come out a total mess. For example Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptu" which has been provided with the charming title "I am Forever Chasing Rainbows", or Grieg's "Ich Liebe Dich" (I Love Thee) set to entirely different words.

It is absolutely impossible to take classical music and re-arrange it for a jazz dance band. Why? It may be asked, because all music must have form. When the elements of unity and variety are sensibly matched, evenly balanced, the form is good. On the other hand, a composition is formless, or faulty in form when the component parts are missing or jumbled together without regard to proportion and relation. To make myself more clear take again as an example Tschaikowsky's B flat minor Concerto. The theme used is only one of many occurring in this composition. The composer has taken these main themes found in the three movements of his work and built around them secondary ideas or thoughts which he has expressed through unity, contrast, and coherence, the main principles followed while composing. Then

the dance orchestra takes only one of the themes and rewrites the melody the musical thought of the composer is broken and there no longer exists the balance, proportion, unity and coherence of ideas. Besides good form, which is usually present in all classical works, there must be a large orchestra consisting of strings, bass, wind, and percussion instruments to convey to the listener the musical images, ideas, thoughts, or emotions which the composer through the peculiar powers of his genius is able to transform into a medium of physical sounds. A small dance orchestra is incapable of expressing these ideas since it lacks the instruments that add tone quality, and coloring to the great works of the masters.

Jazz is jazz and classics are classics, let's leave them that way.

—English llb Patricia Hodgman

### THE TRAIN

A crowded daycoach on a transcontinental train--the acme of discomfort. As the express glides swiftly between rows of empty boxcars at loading centers and between endless lines of coal gondolas at industrial hubs, the once-tranquil setting of prosperous production is a scene of bustling war effort. Viewed from the overcrowded coach the fleeting landscape is a silhouette of glowing blastfurnaces, towering smokestacks, and sprawling and mushrooming factories. The working shifts are as endless as a conveyor belt whose task is endless also. Everywhere is strenuous movement and awesome result.

Within the coach are the human cogs to the military and civil machinery in the performance of maximum war endeavor. At dusk, and by necessity of dimout regulations, the lights in the car are dulled, leaving a blanketing haze over the occupants, who are squeezed into their seats like Parker House rolls in the package. Of the hundred or so passengers only a sprinkle of civilian clothings is visible. One can easily imagine a rifle or a lathe or a scalpel or a sextant as the tool of nearly everyone.

The semi-stillness is interrupted occasionally by crying babies or solicitous confection vendors cruising through the train. Sleeping like most of the passengers is a service-ribboned sailor in the center of the coach, his drawn and anxious face expressive of the ominous threats he endured at sea. His "ditty-bag" dangles haphazardly from the rack above him, all his effects being packed promiscuously inside. Behind him, doubled up like a jack-in-the-box, but without its mirth-provoking implications, is an eighteen-year-old Marine veteran. His never-ceasing diet of mortars, mud and much and greasy coffee between enemy attacks at Tarawa has gifted him with the ironically useful trick of sleeping without closing one or both eyes. The jostling and shaking of the train rocks him and others like a baby in the crib. Back in the Pullmans, however, the ostentatiously-attired pleasure travelers complain bitterly of the rough riding.

The flicker of a warning signal outside draws attention across the aisle to a wary mother propped against the side of her seat to allow room for two small children. A stuffed elephant and a Raggedy-Ann doll keep silent vigil over the sleeping tots, but nothing of that sort watches over the thin and troubled mother. She gazes wonderingly out of the window and beyond the glow

of a factory, perhaps to an imaginative place where a loved one is. A tired hand grasps a starred telegram, and the train speeds on.

Popping peanuts quite mechanically into his mouth is a brusquely-spoken and square-jawed soldier sitting near the rear of the car. Three days in the same train, same car, same seat, and same position has only accentuated his thirst for commercial travel. That driving a half-track is anything but luxury travel is undisputed, so a sardine-packed daycoach with stifling temperature and slab-like seats is a rare treat. The soldier radiates contentment, even surpassing that of a well-known cow. His satisfaction, another's dissatisfaction, someone's happiness, another's unhappiness, all states of mind are displayed in an area smaller than their complexities.

As darkness settles and the train rolls swiftly onward, the occupants of the daycoach wiggle and twist and slump into suitable positions for the night. Soon only the "clattery-clattery-clank" on the rails is audible, mingled with a sinister-sounding and far-off blow of the whistle. The dimmed lights are extinguished, save for two vestibule globes. The porter sashes a wet mop down the aisle, pushing orange peels and gum wrapper before him. Then he, too, seeks a place to sit. Serenity now reigns in the car.

Outside the moon shines lucidly on the rails, causing a reflecting beam, out of which spring twinkling figures that dance and skip and then disappear into nothingness. The train seems to race uselessly with the river that it borders, sometimes being separated from it by a clump of trees or an infringing row of buildings—likely as not an old ghost lumber mill. The train seems to rumble along its correct route instinctively, and naturally so, after making the same run for many years. Hissing steam and pounding drive wheels tap out their message of "...got-to-get-'em-there-got-to-get-'em-there..." as the mammoth engine thunders over the rails to its destination. Inside the coach are the hundred passengers that the express is "getting there", each with a more urgent mission than his fellow traveler. The antiquated car, the dirt, heat, and crying babies are not realized; everyone has a place to go and a job to do. The strainsteams on.

## RETURN AT DUSK

After the last red rays of sunset  
 When dusk had begun to creep  
 Upon the prairie,  
 I began to move my cattle  
 Toward their bedding grounds.

I found a new-born calf  
 In my herd that night,  
 And it had  
 The markings of a thoroughbred.

Now at the day's end  
 The sight of the new calf  
 Brought a happy song  
 To my heart,  
 For he was the shadow  
 Of a new hope.

---English 11b, Selma Rud

## SEASIDE

Maybe it was just getting used to something different that gave me that odd sensation. Maybe I would never have felt like that if I had lived my life in open spaces with vast stretches of water, desert and prairie. The long, lazy days I spent lying in the cool white sand on the beach, combing it for Japanese floats, that break loose from fishing boats, were restful and pleasant. Yet something was lacking. Something I could not explain. Somewhere within me lay a yearning to return once more to the mountains where I was born. At night, tired from digging clams and hunting shells, with the taste of salt on my lips, I would fall asleep only to dream I was drowning in the middle of the vast ocean which in the daytime had seemed so beautiful. I seemed to be grasping for something floating past and each time I almost had it, it would slip through my fingers and float beyond my reach. Even days began to lose their tranquility and I longed to go back where the mountains closed out eternity forming a small compact world of their own; to a place where I would not have to look into space and feel the constant urge to take binoculars and bring close whatever lay out there that distance was hiding.

---English 15 Frances Coverdale

